



HUI HO'OMALU
STATEWIDE
RESOURCE ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

Inside this issue:

Sister to the Parentless: A Foster Sister Story	2
Healing Connections	3
Mama Kazama's Mantra Moments	4
'Ohana is Forever 2	4
PRIDE Reminders	5
Hawaiian Bracelet Presentation	5
National Adoption Day in Hawaii	6
Big Joyous Holiday Party	6
Happy Anniversary	7
A Visit to Kualoa Ranch	7
Name the Newsletter Winner	8
Blankets & Cookies for E. Hawaii Keiki	8
Survey Prize Winners	8
Calendar of Events	9

Building Connections

A Newsletter for Foster/Resource Families



Volume 1, Issue 2

January 2008

Our Story...

By Dean & Laverne Hess, East Hawai'i Foster/Resource Parent

Being a resource parent is a hard job but it is also very rewarding. It feels good to be able to help a child.

We have been a foster/resource family for 2 ½ years and have cared for 2 children, one taken in on an emergency basis. We became resource parents when a family member asked us to care for our third cousin, "R". We talked about it and knew that we wanted to keep her in our family. When R came to us, she was 2 months old and was drug exposed. Today, she is 2 ½ years old.

R came into our lives at the best time. All of our birth children were older and would be graduating soon. We also knew that we could provide her with a safe, loving and healthy environment. We quickly got attached to her and she became one of the best parts of our family. There was much to learn but it also felt like a new beginning for our family. We all started going to church together and felt like we became closer as a family.



We tried many different ways to help R maintain contact with her birth parents. We understand the importance of helping R stay connected to her birth family. While contact continues with her birth father, contact with her birth mother is not possible at this time. We don't want to cut them out of her life; we tell her that she has 2 daddies and 2 mommies and that she is a VERY special girl.

Whenever we look at her, we can see that she is very special. Even if she cries or if I am not having a good day, I just praise the Lord that she is with us; it just makes us happy to have her. I didn't know having a foster child makes such a difference. She has been a blessing in our home.

The Hui Ho'omalua Statewide Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) provides support to the foster/resource family community through identifying ongoing needs, facilitating communication and by sharing resources.

The Building Connections Newsletter is published four times a year to provide information regarding foster and adoptive care to foster/resource parents, service providers, legal guardians and to the public.

This newsletter may be viewed on the following websites:

[www.hawaii.gov/dhs/protection/
social_services/child_welfare/
foster](http://www.hawaii.gov/dhs/protection/social_services/child_welfare/foster)

www.pidfoundation.org

To be placed on the mailing list or if you would like to receive an electronic copy, please call 441-1125 (O'ahu), 888-879-8970 (Toll Free) or E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org

Partners in Development
Foundation
2040 Bachelot St.
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817-2433

Sister to the Parentless

By Rebecca Carvalho, Foster Sister

I am 1 out of 19 children to the Carvalho Clan. The oldest is 24 and the youngest is 2. My mom and Dad are 41 and 40 respectively. There are currently six children in the household but Hey! Who knows, maybe I will come home today and there will be seven or four! I mean just last month we got two new additions to our clan. How is this all possible? Two words: Foster Care.

"It's all Rebecca's fault," my mom always says whenever someone questions our massive family. She's telling the story about how I always wanted a sister. My mom couldn't have any children naturally; therefore foster care became the viable option. Well, thanks to my big mouth, I am now the official babysitter and more is expected of me. I am not just an older sister; I am expected to be a positive role model to these children.

Being a foster family is one the most eye opening experiences anyone could ever have. Each child who enters our home has their own story. My adopted brother and sister were "ice" babies. Many have behavioral and psychological problems. Sometimes it can cause a fair amount of stress to the entire family, but I just learned to go with it no matter how sticky it may seem. I have empathy for them, and I admit it's a little hard for me because all the attention revolves around them. But, I've come to be very understanding because it's really not their fault. I know if I were them I would have a difficult time too.

Our most recent additions, A and K, are both very precious and I've become fond of them, especially A. She's a very silly little girl. Every morning she gets up and follows me around. She always wants to brush her teeth when I brush my teeth or she checks what I am going to wear on my feet. If it is shoes, she quickly runs to her room to grab socks. Even though I get weary of it, she's too lovable for me to say anything because I know she looks up to me. I mean, she says to me every time, "When I big like you I want to be just like you, okay?" I just laugh. It's a strange feeling having little kids look up to you like you are some hero, because I don't look at myself that way. I just think of myself as a sister who cares. Although, now I have to be extra careful what I do because I know they are watching me.

When A asked me if she was going to live with us forever, I told her maybe. It's a difficult question to answer because I don't know what the future holds and many children have gone back to their homes. Reunification with their parents is the main goal in foster care. They are not up for adoption unless their parents' rights are terminated. Therefore, it can be frustrating for me because I get so attached to them. I mean, I am happy that they are able to go back home but at the same time I have such tender memories with them, it's all just bittersweet. I am cut off from their lives and all I can do is wonder about them. But, they are forever embedded into my heart and memory.

Foster Care is a huge thing in my life, it practically *is* my life. Everyday I am faced with a challenge. To make a difference in these children's lives, through simple things like reading them story books or taking them to the movies on weekends as my mom works, means so much. I am more than just a loving sister; I am a role model, a leader.



Healing Connections

By Wilma Friesema, MA
Family Engagement Specialist

Foster youth, even those in the happiest homes, often live with these gnawing questions: Where's my family? What are they doing? *How* are they doing? If the youth have been in foster care for many years they may even wonder: *Who* are my family? Do I look like mom or dad?

K, a 16 yr old youth in permanent custody, lived with those questions. She was my first client in the **Family Connections Program** begun by Epic, Inc. 'Ohana Conferencing in July of '07. K entered the foster care system at age seven. When I met her she had contact with one sister who was adopted and living on the mainland. The rest of her very large family was somewhere, but K didn't have a clue how to find them. Plus, seeing them again was a little scary. What if they didn't like her or were still angry? Yet more questions without answers.

Many emancipated youth try to find family on their own, but painful histories and years of separation make reestablishing family ties a bumpy process at best, or unsuccessful at worst. The goal of the **Family Connections Program** is to help foster youth navigate that process, develop ties, and find the answers they need.

In K's case, I was able to locate 42 of her relatives via internet searches, phone calls, and in-person meetings. She's met with her maternal and paternal grandmothers, several half sisters, a brother, cousins, and aunties. I worked with K and her family nearly every step of the way. Family reunions and a big graduation party are in the works.

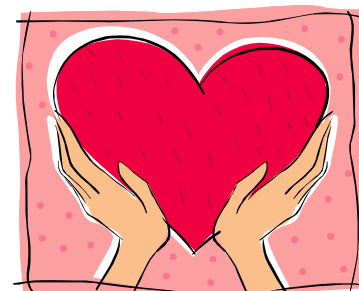
K's foster mom, L, has this to say about the changes she sees: "K is happier, more content. When she first came to live with me she was angry. Now she's calm because I think she doesn't feel left out anymore. She talks about her family all the time, but I feel she appreciates me more too. It's like she no longer has this fantasy family because she's had good experiences with them, but a bad one too...What I like is I get to be more real. I don't have to be a fantasy foster parent either."

**"The pieces of
my life are falling
into place..."**

K and L's relationship is deepening and K's self-confidence is growing. As she said after her last visit with her grandmother, "The pieces of my life are falling into place, Miss Wilma." K is integrating her past with her present, and is emerging a strong young woman who now has answers. Answers that shed light on her past, and brighten the path of her future.

For more information about the Family Connections Program contact:

Wilma Friesema,
Family Engagement Specialist
Epic, Inc. 'Ohana Conferencing
1130 N. Nimitz Highway, Suite C-210
Honolulu, HI 96817
748-7921



Mama Kazama's Mantra Moments...

By Lynne Kazama, DHS Program Development Staff



Happy Holidays
Mama Kazama

'OHANA IS FOREVER is the title of our Youth Permanence workshop in 2007 — created by the Hawai'i Foster Youth Coalition — to emphasize the importance of forever birth family/kin connections for our children/youth who come into foster care — through a relative/kin permanent placement and/or maintaining birth family/kin ties.



'Ohana is Forever: Nothing to Us Without Us...Save the Date!

By Faye Kimura, HI Court Improvement Program Co-coordinator

On July 20, 2007, the DHS funded a remarkable conference entitled "'Ohana is Forever" at the Koolau Golf Club that was attended by over 450 members of the child welfare community. The conference focus was on the importance of maintaining family connections for children in foster care and on continuing to seek permanent families for foster youth. Based on the conference evaluations, attendees left the event overwhelmingly in favor of supporting family connections for foster youth and asked that similar events be held annually. A follow-up conference is scheduled for **MARCH 27, 2008 (Thursday)**...

What is in store for 'Ohana is Forever 2?

DHS/CWS will be partnering again with the Family Court/Judiciary, Court Improvement Program, UH Law School, Kapi'olani Child Protection Center, and the Hawai'i Foster Youth Coalition to launch this follow-up conference, during Spring Break 2008, to the hugely successful 2007 'Ohana is Forever Conference.

In addition to foster/resource parents, child welfare service personnel, V/GALs, judges, attorneys, etc., the goal is to have **100 foster youth from all the islands** in the audience. 'Ohana 2 will focus on specific transition services/programs (i.e., independent living skills, Medicaid, higher ed., leadership development, scholarships/financial aids, etc.) for our youth.

'Ohana 2 will be held at the beautiful and tranquil Koolau Golf Club once again! The day will be packed with information for our youth! The program will be largely planned by the foster youth themselves.

- The Youth Coalition will be previewing a "Runaway Prevention" curriculum.
- We will have another DVD premiere!
- Digital stories on transitioning out of care from our youth.
- Test your knowledge about transition services for youth via instant voting.
- Prize drawings for the foster youth who attend the Conference
- + so much more...

More details to come, but in the meantime...please help us encourage foster youth participation!

PRIDE Reminders

By Margie Funai, PRIDE Trainer &
Sharon Simms, CCH Recruitment & Training Coordinator

Remember to celebrate the strengths that your child possesses. To do this, one must look for the good in your child. To find the good in your child be caring, committed, and consistent in your interactions with them. Enjoy, play, and laugh with your child daily.



Remember to utilize your TEAM (DHS Social Worker, GAL, etc.) to problem solve issues surrounding the child or children in your care.

- ✕ You are a part of a professional team that is working together to meet the needs of the child/children in your care.
- ✕ Keep your TEAM members informed of issues that arise with the child/children.
- ✕ Communicate effectively with your TEAM to meet the needs of the child/children.

Remember to be respectful to the BIRTH PARENTS of the child/children in your care.

- ✕ Do not speak negatively about the parents in front of the child/children.
- ✕ Respect the items given to the child/children by their birth parents.
- ✕ Support visits with the child/children and their birth parents.
- ✕ Communicate concerns to your TEAM in an objective manner.

Royal Hawaiian Heritage Jewelry: Kokua Ohana and DHS presented personalized Hawaiian bracelets to 25 girls who are in foster care on Veteran's Day, Monday, November 12, 2007

Once again, Royal Hawaiian Heritage Jewelry (RHHJ) owner Patrick Breeden elected to present 25 girls (up to 18 years of age) in foster care with a personalized Hawaiian bracelet. This is the third consecutive year for this giveaway!

In 2006, RHHJ partnered with Kokua 'Ohana to donate and distribute 25 bracelets to girls in the State's child welfare system. Hawaiian bracelets have traditionally been given as tokens of love and in recognition of great achievement. This year, Kokua 'Ohana received over 40 nominations sent in by DHS social workers, foster parents, and other foster care agency workers who submitted stories that captured the girls' sense of perseverance in foster care. Selecting only 25 nominations was very difficult, as all stories were well deserving of this wonderful gift.

The presentation began at 10 a.m. and at the RHHJ store on 1130 Bishop Street where the girls and their foster families had the opportunity to tour the jewelry factory. The girls were able to choose the design and emblem color of their bracelets, giving each the opportunity to personally design a bracelet unique and of their own.



National Adoption Day in Hawai'i

By Kōkua 'Ohana &
Carol Morimoto

November 17th was National Adoption Day, but here in Hawai'i, it was extra special when 16 foster children were adopted into permanent families consisting of both relative/kin and non-relative/kin. Through the collaborative efforts of various community foster care agencies and programs, DHS, Family Court, and private businesses and individuals, Hawaii celebrated adoptive children and families at the Family Courthouse with music, games, goodie bags, food and fun for everyone.

In Hawai'i, the number of children adopted from foster care has significantly increased in recent years. Through the collaborative efforts between DHS and community agencies many children have found permanent homes. In recognition of these accomplishments, DHS received a 2007 Adoption Excellence Award from the Administration of Children and Families. Congratulations on this national award!



Big Joyous Holiday Party

By Foster Family Programs of Hawaii

The vision of almost 1200 beaming children unwrapping holiday presents at the Big Joyous Holiday Party is a sight to behold. The annual Holiday Party, put on by Foster Family Programs of Hawai'i and DHS, was a huge success. Almost 2000 children and foster parents attended the ninth year of the Big Joyous Holiday Party for foster children and their families.

Community support was abundant this year with a record number of toys and gifts donated, allowing every child to receive two gifts. Close to 700 volunteers were instrumental in making the party a success. Entertainment flowed throughout the party featuring music, hula, drill teams, and lots of holiday songs. Sponsored activity booths provided children with many entertaining activities, including Hawaiian crafts, games, face painting, balloon animals, button making, and family photo opportunities with Santa and the exotic Bird Man.

Local community businesses and individuals sponsored 84 tables in support of the event and Rotary Club of Honolulu gave a generous grant of \$7,000 in support of the event.

Mahalo to all of our supporters and volunteers who made the Ninth Annual Big Joyous Holiday Party a huge success!



Happy Anniversary!

Mahalo to these families who have been caring for Hawai'i's keiki for many years!

Emily & Greg Ascino (West Hawai'i)

Foster/Resource family for **9 years**

Kim Bowlin (Maui)

Foster/Resource family for **5 years**

Emergency Shelter Home for **1 year**

**Charles & Gwendolyn Comer
(Oahu & East Hawai'i)**

Foster/Resource family for **29 years**

How long have you been a foster/resource parent? We would like to honor you by printing your name and current years of service in our newsletter.

We know you are out there but we need your help. Please send your name and years of service to:

RAC@pidfoundation.org

(Oahu) 441-1125

(Toll Free) 888-879-8970



Mahalo for your dedication and hard work!

A Visit to Kualoa Ranch

By Kōkua 'Ohana

Foster children and their families were treated to a day at Kualoa Ranch on November 10, 2007. This event was sponsored by Kualoa Ranch, Heart Gallery Hawai'i, and Project Visitation. In attendance were 150 children and 150 adults all ready for a day of fun. Activities, such as bus tours of the ranch & movie sets, horse rides for the kiddies, histories of the ranch in the movie theater, and visits to a petting zoo, were available for families to enjoy throughout the day. Heart Gallery Hawai'i photographers were available to take portrait photos of foster children, and volunteers from the foster care community provided games and activities for the children.



Name The Newsletter Contest

Mahalo to everyone who submitted their suggestions on what to name this newsletter! While we received many great ideas, we could pick only one name.

Mahalo to Richele Awana for providing the winning entry!



Blankets & Cookies for East Hawai'i Foster Keiki

*By Michele Carvalho,
Hui Ho'omalua E HI Community Liaison*

Much Mahalo to Jessica Martin from Church of God in Hilo who coordinated and provided blankets, as seen here in the Hilo DHS office, for more than 50 foster children in Child Welfare Services. Also, a big thank you to Keaau High School and Hilo High School Home Economics Class that baked cookies for the families!



Survey Prize Winners

Mahalo to all of you who returned the survey that was in the October 2007 issue. Your feedback will assist us in better meeting the needs of the foster/resource community. All individuals who returned the survey had their names entered in a prize drawing. These are the three lucky winners of \$20 Longs Gift Cards. Congratulations!

- ❖ Charita Sadlucop (O'ahu)
- ❖ Frederick & Magdalena Spielman (O'ahu)
- ❖ Linnae Kauwe (Big Island)



Advertise in the Newsletter—Promote Your Business

100% of the proceeds will be used towards supporting our foster/resource families

Display advertisements with borders: business card size = \$30; 1/4 page = \$50; 1/2 page = \$75; full page = \$115.

Send information to:

Hui Hoomalu—RAC, 680 Iwilei Rd., Ste. 500, Honolulu, HI 96817

Phone: 441-1125 (Oahu); 888-879-8970 (Toll Free); Fax: 441-1122; E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org

Hui Ho'omalua RAC reserves the right to accept, reject or edit advertisements, articles and notices of events based on publication schedule, space limitations, and appropriateness.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH 2008

27 Ohana is Forever: Nothing to Us Without Us Conference, Koolau Golf Club. See article on page 4.

JUNE 2008

Foster Family Programs of Hawai'i will be hosting five (5), 1-Day Conferences in June 2008. The conferences will be held in Hilo, Kona, Kauai, Maui, and Oahu. More details to follow.

ONGOING EVENTS

SUPPORT GROUPS by Foster Family Programs of Hawai'i. Please call FFP for dates, times, and locations of monthly support groups at 521-9531 ext. 245 (O'ahu) or 1-866-545-0882 (Toll Free for



Help! Looking For Stories!

Would you like to share some helpful tips? Got an inspirational story to tell? Know of some useful resources in your community?

These are just some of the many possibilities that you can contribute to this newsletter. Please send them over so we can all benefit from each other's wisdom!



Suggestions? Feedback?

We would appreciate any feedback, comments and suggestions on ways that we can improve this newsletter so that it is useful to you. What would you like to see in it? Topics of interest?

We look forward to hearing from you!

E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org
441-1125 (O'ahu)
888-879-8970 (Toll Free)

Community Classifieds

Do you have something that you would like to donate to other foster/resource parents but you don't know how to get the word out? Are you looking for something that would help you care for your foster/adoptive keiki but you don't know where to find it? The **Community Classifieds** may be able to help.

Let's help each other by sharing our resources. The **Community Classifieds** is FREE to post items to donate as well as wanted ads if you are looking for items to help you care for your keiki.

Send your classified ads to: E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org
(Oahu) 441-1125
(Toll Free) 888-879-8970

**HUI HO'OMALU
STATEWIDE
RESOURCE
ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

2040 Bachelot St.
Honolulu, HI 96817-2433

441-1125 (O'ahu)
888-879-8970 (Toll Free)

Fax: 441-1122

E-mail: RAC@pidfoundation.org

The concept for the Statewide Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) was created by the Department of Human Services (DHS) as a means to support the foster/resource family community. Hui Ho'omalū facilitates this committee comprised of foster/resource parents and various community agencies, all dedicated to providing services and support to Hawai'i's keiki and the foster/resource families who care for them. The purpose of the RAC is to identify ongoing needs, facilitate communication, share resources, provide information through a statewide calendar of events and a quarterly newsletter and report on local projects and other topics of interest to benefit Hawai'i's foster/resource families.

RAC Committee Members:

Catholic Charities Hawai'i—Hui Ho'omalū
Department of Health

Department of Human Services

EPIC, Inc. 'Ohana Conferencing

Family Court

Foster Family Programs of Hawai'i—Hui Ho'omalū

Foster/Resource Parents

Hawai'i Foster Parent Association

Hawai'i Foster Youth Coalition

Heart Gallery Hawai'i

HOPE INC

Partners in Development Foundation—Hui Ho'omalū & Kōkua 'Ohana

Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center

University of Hawai'i, School of Social Work

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
HONOLULU, HI
PERMIT NO. 1554

PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION
2040 Bachelot St.
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817-2433

